Ex-CIA Aide Says Johnson Quashed Israel A-Bomb Data

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The Central Intelligence Agency told President Johnson ni 1968 that Israel had atomic weapons, but Johnson ordered then-CIA Director Richard M. Helms not to tell anyone else, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara, according to a former agency official.

Johnson's handling of the report of Israel's weapons capability was disclosed to 11 Nuclear Regulatory Commission senior officials during a closed-door February 1976 briefing by Carl Duckett, then the CIA's third ranking official.

Classified NRC records of the briefing obtained by The Washington Post also indicate the CIA believed the question of whether highly enriched uranium was diverted from the Nuclear Materials and Equipment Corp. plant at Apollo, Pa., "was academic," because the Israeli's had developed their own nuclear weapons capability by them.

Duckett's briefing was in connection with an NRC investigation of whether part or all of more than 200 pounds of highly enriched uranium—which can be used to fabricate atomic weapons— was stolen or diverted from the NUMEC plant.

According to the classified document, "Duckett raised the question of whether the United States had intentionally allowed material to go to Israel. He said that if any such scheme was under consideration, he would have known about it and he never heard so much as a rumor about this."

NRC spokesman Joseph Fouchard said yesterday, "The commission has no comment on this matter because the report is still classified."

The NRC record did not disclose any further information on why Johnson, as alleged by Duckett, wanted Helms to keep the Isreaeli bomb report from Rusk and McNamara.

On Saturday the NRC released a censored 550-page report in response to a House committee inquiry over testimony given last summer by NRC Excutive Director Lee V. Gossick.

The report said Gossick "testified incorrectly" before the House Commerce Committee when he said the NRC had "no evidence that a significant amount of nuclear material had been stolen" from the NUMEC plant.